

**A***h Mo* would have not been possible without the editorial assistance of Nancy Griffin, the writing and compilation work of Dr. Tren Griffin and my friends at Preston Thorgrimson Shidler Gates and Ellis.

# Introduction

**T**his book contains legends collected by Judge Arthur E. Griffin from Indian tribes in Washington State. The legends were told to Judge Griffin by Indian storytellers between 1884 and 1947. The legends have been rewritten by the Judge's grandson and great-grandson to make them more pleasant for children to read. Serious students of Indian folklore should refer to the original stories which reflect the complex writing style of the period. The original stories collected by Judge Griffin can be found in research libraries, such as Suzzallo Library at the University of Washington.

Indian storytellers were skilled at bringing each of the characters and animals in the legend to life through gestures and animal calls. Since the storytellers lived with the birds, fish and animals, few secrets were hidden from their keen vision. The legends were told in the lights and shadows around open fires, which gave the stories a magical quality.

Some of the Indian storytellers were professionals who traveled from village to village. The Indian children were required to pay strict attention when a story was being told. To prove they were listening, the children were told to say "Ah Mo" at frequent intervals. As the "Ah Mos" diminished, the children were whisked off to bed.

The legends in this book took place a time long ago when people, animals, and forces of nature could talk to each other. People and animals often had magical powers to do what would be impossible today. Spiders could climb into the sky and a boy could turn himself into the sun. The Indians referred to this time as having been "before the change." The Indians also believed that every person and animal had a guardian spirit who protected and watched over them. The guardian spirit usually took the form of an animal and had magical powers which allowed people and animals to escape danger and perform heroic deeds. Young Indian men ventured alone into the forest, hoping for a sign informing them which animal was their guardian spirit. Chief Sealth, the man who gave the city of Seattle its name, discovered as a young man that his guardian spirit was a sea gull.